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Reflecting again on our editorial practices and purposes in *ELTED*

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As *ELTED*'s journey draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to offer some very brief reflections from my perspective as a long-standing member of its editorial board (I joined 20 years ago in 2006) and, more recently, its editorial advisory board. I will focus my reflections on an original quintessential feature of the journal, which has been its role in "apprenticing newcomers into the academic discourse community" (Kennedy et al., 2008, p. 52). Here, I am quoting from a piece that we published in Volume 11 of *ELTED*, which was based on a reflective conversation taking stock of our editorial practices and purposes at that stage of the journal's journey, over a decade after its launch. Participants in the conversation were Judith Kennedy (founder of *ELTED* and chair of its editorial board at the time), Richard Smith (secretary of the editorial board), and me (member of the editorial board and co-editor of that volume with Judith). Our reflective conversation was partly prompted by an article published in the same volume by Adamson and Muller (2008) reporting on a qualitative study of perceived roles, responsibilities and practices among those involved in peer review and editorial board work for a sample of journals in English language teaching research.

As we noted in our reflective conversation in 2008, one of the aims of *ELTED* was to offer a supportive forum for those engaged in English language teacher education, training and development who might be relatively new to publishing research-based articles within this field. Richard commented how, in those early years before *ELTED* moved online and became more widely known, contributions to the journal were mostly those that were solicited rather than unsolicited. Alongside invited contributions from established scholars in the field of ELT, many contributions came from our own students who were encouraged to develop their first published pieces. With respect to mentoring newcomers, and citing Adamson and Muller's paper in our conversation, we discussed how we saw ourselves balancing a role between "academic gatekeeping" and "mentoring" as editors of the journal.

This brought us to reflect on the question of how far we were happy to go as editors in "helping" authors to revise their manuscripts or even "rewriting" parts for them and "tidying up" the language. We considered how our approach in this regard tended to depend on whether we saw ourselves in a mentoring relationship with the author or not. For example, in cases where we had encouraged our own current or former students to contribute a paper, such a mentoring relationship functioned as an extension of our existing teacher education relationship with these students. In addition, we felt willing to fulfil a mentoring role to support authors who were based in professional contexts lacking access to any kind of apprenticeship into the academic discourse community, such as Judith's hypothetical example of someone working in teacher training in a small town in Namibia where resources could be limited. In contrast, for the increasing number of unsolicited contributions received since *ELTED* moved online, we felt we were less inclined, in Richard's words, "to go the extra mile" in mentoring and helping authors to revise or rewrite their articles.

As I think back now to our conversation nearly two decades ago and reflect on this mentorship aspect of our editorial practices and purposes in *ELTED*, I am struck by how this conversation connects thematically with research that I am currently pursuing on how academic writers use generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) to edit, polish or transform their work. In the same way that, as journal editors, we asked ourselves how far we were prepared to go in helping authors to revise their manuscripts or even to rewrite parts of their manuscript for them, my current research explores how far academic authors are prepared to go in using generative AI tools to revise or (re)write their manuscripts. My research team and I are interested in how academic writers navigate the ethical boundaries between acceptable versus unacceptable practices in using AI tools to support their work, as the technological

and regulatory landscape continues to evolve while the ethical boundaries remain unclear (see https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/research/aiwriting/).

In our project, we are especially interested in the perspectives and experiences of academic scholars from non-English language backgrounds who are looking (or in many cases needing) to publish and disseminate their research in English and who may face additional linguistic hurdles. Recently, I was talking to one of my PhD students (from a non-English language background) who was preparing to submit a paper to an international journal and was asking me what she should do about declaring her use of AI tools to edit and polish her manuscript. The question arose because the journal in question provides no clear guidance on AI use and associated declarations. Instead, the journal directs those needing editing or writing support to its publisher's language services page, through which (for different fee levels) authors can arrange to have their manuscripts professionally edited, copy-edited, or even translated. As with professional editing and translation services offered by other journal publishers, the fees are generally substantial. For example, based on a quick search on Taylor & Francis's editing services page, I was quoted a fee of over a thousand US dollars for "comprehensive editing" of an 8,000-word manuscript and two thousand US dollars for a more "premium" editing service. This is clearly a significant amount of money and highlights the linguistic and economic inequalities of an English-dominant academic publishing industry for a global multilingual academic community. These fundamental inequalities exist irrespective of whether scholars have the financial resources to avail themselves of such editing services or not.

An emerging theme in our current project is the potential for generative AI technologies to help level the playing field in this regard by facilitating the process of writing, editing and polishing manuscripts at no cost or low cost for authors. However, this potential is fraught with complexity when there is currently lack of transparency and consistency about acceptable versus unacceptable practices in using AI tools to support academic writing for publication. In my PhD student's case, as with many informants participating in our project, declaring one's use of AI tools in preparing a manuscript comes with a perceived risk that this may lead to stigmatization or rejection when journal policy guidance is unclear or confusing. Yet, rather perversely, such a risk simply does not exist if authors are prepared and able to pay the substantial fees for professional editing or translation of their manuscripts instead of resorting to AI.

Of course, there is no question of risk if journal editors themselves are prepared "to go the extra mile" in mentoring and helping authors to revise and rewrite their manuscripts. It is thus with a sense of wistfulness that I think back to our original editorial practices and purposes in *ELTED* and reflect on how these kinds of one-to-one mentoring and apprenticeship relationships with authors now seem a rarity in the academic publishing world. While, with plenty of caveats, generative AI tools may offer a potentially valuable alternative resource for authors in this regard, they simultaneously exacerbate the problem since their widespread use is significantly increasing the volume of submissions to journals, thus creating more work for editorial teams and reducing or eliminating capacity to go the extra mile in mentoring authors. In short, for our *ELTED* journal that originally set out to apprentice newcomers into the academic discourse community, the journey is coming to an end at a time when the academic publishing and technological landscape has irrevocably changed.

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